

American Opinion Summary

Department of State

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1. FOREIGN AID REFORM

Comment on the Chester Bowles foreign aid memorandum reflects the view that reform in U.S. aid procedures is desirable. After noting that Mr. Bowles suggested development of a practical basis for classifying countries wishing assistance, the Washington Post concludes that his memorandum "indicates the direction in which the program must move if the Administration is to avoid the kind of debacle it has just experienced in Congress."

The memorandum is interpreted by some commentators as indicating that the Administration is considering aid policy modifications. As the Wall Street Journal expresses it: "Maybe even the Administration...is beginning to reach the same conclusion" as many Congressmen have reached that "the present program is simply not doing the job in today's world."

Somewhat more bluntly, Senator Proxmire interpreted the Bowles statement as indicating that "the administration, too, recognizes that we have been wasting money in the foreign aid program and is resolved to do something positive and constructive about it."

Hearst's New York Journal-American suggests that Mr. Bowles has reversed "his give-give-give away position on foreign aid" because he is "a politician" who has "read the writing on the wall" of public opinion.

The Baltimore Sun sees in the Congressional cut in the President's foreign aid request "a warning symptom of bipartisan legislative doubts about the scope and form of our aid program." The Sun interprets the Bowles memorandum, and an earlier address by Eugene R. Black, as evidence that a re-examination is proceeding in other quarters. The Sun specifically cites Algeria as an illustration of the need for new "guidelines" in aid decisions, and declared: "Need is not enough."

Without mentioning the Bowles memorandum, the Philadelphia Inquirer points to Algeria's Ben Bella as one of the "two-by-four blackmailers" who can never be satisfied and cannot be trusted, and advocates clamping down on such "two-faced swindlers."

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2. CUBA

Cuban President Dorticos' denunciation of the U.S. draws sharp rebukes from commentators (e.g., N.Y. Herald Trib., Phila. Inquirer), who see his UN General Assembly "harangue of slanderous insults" as "a foul blow swung straight from the Kremlin" (Inquirer).

"But beneath and behind his strong language there appeared a note of anxiety" that Russia will not support Cuba if the Americas resort to forceful measures, says the Herald Tribune; and he suggested that Havana would like some modus vivendi with the U.S. and a guarantee against attack. This is possible, this paper concludes, if Cuba will remove Red arms and personnel, disavow the Communist cause and return to the hemisphere family as a democratic state. The Philadelphia Inquirer, meanwhile, is concerned that Ambassador Stevenson did not "suspend the niceties of protocol" and "deliver America's answer" to Dorticos "in the most forthright manner possible--face to face in the Assembly chamber."

There is continuing support for the projected U.S. plan of "economic reprisals" against arms shipments to Cuba [e.g., Hearst's N.Y. Journal-American, Wash. Star, National Observer, Sen. Proxmire (D-Wis.)]. To William R. Hearst Jr., it is "hearteningly evident that the voice of the people has penetrated the White House and Foggy Bottom."

Some are cautiously optimistic. If the objective is to make Castro wholly dependent on Soviet sources of supply, declares the Watertown Times, the U.S. will still have to obtain "far greater cooperation than it has so far from Allied governments."

This is "'doing something about Cuba' the right way," the Boston Herald feels; and, being "less than a blockade but more than an idle threat," it is "a good compromise" (similarly, Providence Journal). But the Herald believes the plan is "risky; first because it may prove ineffective, in which case we will look foolish, and, second, because it may annoy our maritime friends, who must trade to live." The new strategy is "a small beginning toward a tougher policy," the Chicago News asserts--but the President's "dilemma will grow more complex and dangerous with each day's postponement of a decision to deal with the heart of the problem."

The Chicago Tribune, however, is sharply critical that the Administration "seems to have decided not to walk up to Castro and the Russians in Cuba, but to creep up on them by a circuitous approach." The Tribune argues that "these half measures serve to convince" them "that nothing very positive is to be expected."

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